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## BOOK REVIEWS.

A PHILOSOPHICAL INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS: An Advocacy of the Spiritual Principle in Ethics from the Point of View of Personal Idealism. By W. R. Boyce Gibson, M. A., Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of London. London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Lim., 1904. Pp. viii, 223.

The main objects of this book are, it appears, two: to advocate "the spiritual principle in Ethics," and to advocate "the point of view of Personal Idealism." Mr. Gibson apparently desires to convince us chiefly of the two propositions: (1) that there is a "spiritual principle in morality" (p. 71), and (2) that "the individual's own inviolate spiritual experience is the central fact in Moral Philosophy" (p. v). We may, then, hope to do justice to his book, if we endeavor to discover, first, precisely what it is that he means by these two vague phrases, and secondly, how far he is successful in showing that what he means is true.

What, then, does he mean when he says that there is a "spiritual principle in morality"? He tells us that by showing this, he will establish the existence of Moral Philosophy, as distinguished from what he calls "Ethical Science." In general, he says, there are two ways of considering facts: we may either "identify" a fact with "the object known through an experience" (p. 49); and it is only with such facts as these that "Science" deals: or we may take a fact "concretely as including the relation between ourselves, who experience, and the objects experienced" (p. 50); and it is with facts so taken that Philosophy deals. To take a fact in the latter way is apparently to recognize the "spiritual element present in it" (p. vi); and that all facts may be so taken—that there is a spiritual element present in them all—Mr. Gibson apparently takes to be proved by that argument of Green's, in which he tries to show that "the fact known necessarily implies the knowing subject" (p. 70). In short, in order to prove the "presence of a spiritual principle in all facts," it is, it appears, only necessary to establish the well-known idealistic position, that nothing can exist at any time, unless it is simultaneously known by a knowing subject.

It would appear to follow at once that there is a spiritual element in moral facts, since, if Green's argument is correct, they too, being facts, cannot exist unless they are known. But at this point we first meet with a perplexity; for it appears, from the

author's words, that the presence of a spiritual principle in morality is, after all, *not* proved by the above argument of Green's, but only by an argument of "precisely the same kind" (pp. 71, 82). This new argument is apparently directed to showing that a "motive" is "*toto genere* different" from a mere "want," since it is "*first constituted* by the reaction of the man's self upon [such a want], and its identification of itself" with the object of such a want (p. 84).

It seems plain that this argument is supposed to be analogous to the former one, owing to the fact that, whereas the former tried to show that all facts have a certain relation to the knowing subject, this tries to show that, where we speak of "motives," a "want" has also a relation (though quite a different one) to the knowing subject. But it seems also plain that the two arguments are far from "precisely similar." For whereas the first tries to show that *every* fact is related to the knowing subject, in the manner described by saying that it is known by it; this only maintains that *some* wants are related to the knowing subject in the manner described by saying that the knowing subject identifies itself with their object.

We find, then, that when Mr. Gibson tells us that there is "a spiritual principle" in a fact, he may be expressing his belief in either of two very different propositions. He may mean (1) that the fact in question is simultaneously known by a knowing subject; or he may mean (2) that the fact in question is a "want" and that a knowing subject "identifies" itself with the object of this want. We find moreover, that whereas in the first view there is a spiritual principle in all facts, in the second there is a spiritual principle only in "wants," and not even in all wants, but only in those which are called by certain names.

But this is not all that he means by the phrase; for to say that there is a "spiritual principle in facts" is also, it appears, to say that there is "purpose" in them—that they are "snatched from the realm of mechanism into that of teleology" (p. vi). "We have," Mr. Gibson says, "in the spiritual factor in an experience, the very presence of purposive activity, so that to take experience in its integrity necessitates our treating it teleologically" (p. 50). And accordingly, as we were before told that philosophy is distinguished from science by recognizing the spiritual elements in facts, so we are told, again and again, that it is distinguished by its "teleological method" (p. 49). We

have it, then, that part of what Mr. Gibson desires to advocate is the view that "purposive activity is present in every fact," and that, consequently, every fact may be "treated teleologically." What precisely does he mean by this?

In the first place, we are told that "the teleological point of view, characteristic of true moral philosophy, is well represented by its dominant question: How do facts express . . . spiritual purpose"? (p. 29). And we are further told that "to explain a thing, in the most fundamental sense of the term, is to point out the purpose which it serves" (p. 52). I think, then, that when Mr. Gibson tells us that "purposive activity is present" in every fact, and that consequently every fact can be treated by the teleological method, which is characteristic of philosophy, he does at least mean us to understand that every fact both "expresses" and "serves" a "purpose."

But what precisely does Mr. Gibson mean by a "purpose"? For any definite answer to this question we must turn to Lecture IX, in which Mr. Gibson maintains that Prof. Stout's psychology is "teleological." "All consciousness, with Prof. Stout," he says, "is conative consciousness" (p. 199); and "Prof. Stout's theory of Conation is essentially teleological in character." Of this "teleological" theory of conation Mr. Gibson gives us an account, from which we may elicit the following information:

All conation, we are told, "tends invariably towards an end in one or both of the two senses of that word, 'aim' or 'ending'" (p. 199). But all conation, which tends towards an end in the sense of "aim," also, we find tends towards an "ending" (ib.); and hence we may infer that such conation, as tends towards an end in *one only* of the two senses, does not tend towards an "aim." We have, therefore, two kinds of conation—one which tends *only* towards an "ending" and not towards an "aim," and one which tends towards both; and these two kinds are apparently those spoken of on the next page (p. 200), the first as "directed blindly," the second as "directed deliberately," "to an end." In both cases, Mr. Gibson tells us, the conation "is manifestly purposive," though "only in the latter case" can we "strictly speak of its being teleological" (ib.).

We find, then, that Mr. Gibson does not always use the word "purpose" in that common sense in which it is equivalent to "aim"; since he tells us that even those conations, which are characterized by the absence of any "aim," are yet "manifestly

purposive." In what sense, then, does he use the word? We can, I think, form some positive idea of his meaning by considering two other passages which occur in the same connection. On p. 201 he quotes from Prof. Stout the sentence: "The process would not be a process towards an end, if it could persist without variation in an unsuccessful course"; and he himself, on p. 198, expresses the same view by saying that all process which is directed to an end must vary "such tentative efforts as fail to prove purposive." It is plain that Mr. Gibson here uses the word "purposive" in the same sense as that in which Prof. Stout uses "successful"; and we seem justified in inferring that, whatever else he may mean by "purpose," he does, at least, mean that "to serve a purpose" is to produce a successful result. In short, it appears that, though "aim" and "ending" are *the* two senses of the word "end," yet no process which tended towards an "ending" would be tending towards an end, unless it also tended towards a "successful ending."

It appears, then, that when Mr. Gibson tells us that "there is a spiritual principle" in a fact, he may mean at least three different things. We have indeed, by no means exhausted the richness of meaning which he attaches to the phrase; but to show that there is a "spiritual principle" in moral facts, in at least these three senses, appears to be essential to his purpose. How far is he successful in showing it?

(1) In the first sense, as we have seen, he maintains that there is a spiritual element in *all* facts, and he gives no separate argument to prove it of moral facts. But in order to prove that all facts are simultaneously known, his only argument seems to consist in emphasizing the tautology that whatever we know is known (pp. 76, 77). And from this indisputable truth, it does not seem to follow either that all facts are known at any time, or that what is known at one time cannot exist without being known at the time when it exists. I think, therefore, that Mr. Gibson's demonstration of his first point can hardly be regarded as successful.

(2) As for his second point, it is, as has been said, of quite a different nature from the last. We must assume that Mr. Gibson identifies "moral facts" with "motives" or "acts of will"; and he is then merely maintaining that "moral facts," understood in this sense, differ in an important respect from another class of mental facts, which may be called mere "wants." Now it may,

I think, be admitted that there are important differences between the two kinds of mental fact which Mr. Gibson means by "motives" and "wants"; and also that some well-known psychologists and moral philosophers have sometimes assumed that there was no difference. If so, then Mr. Gibson does here call attention to a distinction of some psychological and ethical importance; and it even seems possible that in a "motive," the subject does, in some sense, "identify himself with an object," whereas in a "want" he does not. But Mr. Gibson does not help us to discover what that sense is.

(3) In his third sense, Mr. Gibson again maintains that there is a spiritual element in *all* facts: and, so far as I can see, he offers no arguments whatever in support of this contention. He seems to regard it as following directly from his first thesis that "all facts are known"; and if we accept this first thesis; if, further, we accept the view, attributed to Prof. Stout, that all consciousness is conative consciousness; if we also take conative to imply "purposive" in the sense above explained; and if, finally, we identify a fact with the consciousness of a fact (as Mr. Gibson appears to do), the conclusion seems to follow. But we may take it, I think, that there must be at least one mistake in these premises, since Mr. Gibson himself appears to admit the very obvious fact that the conclusion is untrue. He admits, we have seen, that some "tentative efforts" may "fail to prove purposive" (p. 188), whence it would seem to follow that some facts, at all events, do not lead to success.

Mr. Gibson's success in showing that there is "a spiritual principle in moral facts" does not, then, appear to be very striking. We have examined three of the theses, which he advances in support of this conclusion, and our result is as follows: His first thesis is a highly disputable conclusion, which seems to be totally unsupported by the reason he gives for it. His second asserts a difference between two kinds of mental fact, which undoubtedly do differ, and of which the difference has sometimes been neglected; and gives a very vague, metaphorical description of the nature of this difference. His third appears to be obviously false; is admitted by Mr. Gibson himself to be so; and no attempt is made to prove it.

But although Mr. Gibson has failed to prove it, it may perhaps be the case that, in all these three senses, a "spiritual principle" is present in all *moral* facts; and that unless this is so, there can

be no such thing as Moral Philosophy. Mr. Gibson has told us that in advocating these three propositions about moral facts, he is advocating the existence of Moral Philosophy; and it is, therefore, pertinent to inquire whether, if true, these three propositions would establish that conclusion.

What bearing, then, upon Moral Philosophy have the three theses (1) that all moral facts are known, (2) that "will" differs from "want" in a peculiar way, (3) that all moral facts serve a purpose?

"Ethical Science," Mr. Gibson tells us, is a purely "inductive" inquiry; and by this he seems plainly to mean that it merely seeks to discover, by observation, what are the causes or effects of certain facts. Now certainly the object of Ethics, as commonly understood, is to discover something quite other than this: part, at least, of its object is to show that some actions "ought" and others "ought not" to be done, and that some of the objects, at which men may aim, are better than others. We may, then, I think, assume that since Mr. Gibson does not include these questions in the sphere of "Ethical Science," he does intend to include them in that of "Moral Philosophy"; and that, therefore, when he tells us that his three theses will establish the existence of Moral Philosophy, he must regard them as sufficient to show that some actions are right and others wrong, and some objects of pursuit better than others.

But do they show this?

The first merely informs us that all moral facts (whatever these may be) are alike in respect of the fact that they are known; and how it will follow from this that they or some other facts are unlike in a totally different respect—how, because all "moral facts" are known, it follows that some things are right and others wrong, or that some things are better than others, I cannot conceive.

With regard to the second thesis, it has been already admitted that it is of some ethical importance; but its importance certainly does not consist in its having any tendency to establish the existence of a Moral Philosophy. From the mere fact that "will" exists, it will not follow that anything is good, and still less that some things are better than others, or that some are right and others wrong. The adherent of "Ethical Science" might perfectly well admit Mr. Gibson's distinction between "will" and "want," and yet, with entire consistency, deny that

there is such a thing as Moral Philosophy. It is true that Mr. Gibson, following Green, supposes that in will there is always present "some idea of the man's personal good" (p. 83). This may, perhaps, be true, in some sense; and if so, from the fact that will exists, it will follow that some things are *regarded* as good; but that anything is so will again not follow.

It is only the third thesis which seems to have any possible connection with the establishment of Moral Philosophy. We have seen that by "purposive" Mr. Gibson sometimes means "conducive to success"; and if he uses the word "success" in one of the senses which it may have, namely, in the sense of a "good result," then from the thesis that all moral facts have good results it will follow that some results are good. If this is what Mr. Gibson means, that we may admit that he here enunciated a principle which is essential to the existence of Moral Philosophy; though it is by no means sufficient to establish that existence. Moral Philosophy does differ from "Ethical Science" by recognizing that some things are good; but it must also recognize that some are better than others, and Mr. Gibson gives us no hint as to how this further conclusion is to be established.

But there is grave reason to doubt whether, after all, Mr. Gibson does understand "purposive" in this, the only sense which will give to any of his theses even the slightest connection with the establishment of Moral Philosophy. For in spite of his explicit declaration that, even where conations have no "aim," they are yet "purposive," yet it is only from those doctrines of Prof. Stout, which deal with "purposes" in the sense of "aims," that Mr. Gibson professes to see "that the transition to Moral Philosophy proper is not only not difficult but inevitable" (p. 207). That, indeed, it is with "purposes" in this sense, and not in any other, that he connects Moral Philosophy, might have been inferred from that perplexing passage in which he told us that blind conations, though "purposive," are yet not strictly "teleological." It is then, not from any connection of "moral facts" with good results, but only from their connection with results that have been aimed at, that Mr. Gibson hopes to establish the existence of Moral Philosophy. It is from doctrines of Prof. Stout's, which consists solely in generalizations about the causes and effects of "aims," that he finds the transition to Moral Philosophy inevitable. In short, it appears that Mr. Gibson is entirely at one with the adherents of "Ethical Science," in hold-



ing that what "ought" to be can be inferred from what regularly does happen. The "teleological" method, which he is recommending as essential to Moral Philosophy, differs in no respect from that which he regards as characteristic of mere "Ethical Science." Both will merely give us causal laws; but Mr. Gibson's will give us laws about the causes and effects of "purposes," whereas, we presume, "Ethical Science" merely discovers the causes and effects of other things. We may certainly agree with Mr. Gibson that purposes have causes and effects; and that if "Ethical Science" denies this, "Ethical Science" is wrong. But that to recognize this, or to recognize any particular causal law whatever, is to establish the existence of Moral Philosophy, we certainly cannot agree.

So much for Mr. Gibson's advocacy of "the spiritual principle in Ethics." Is he a more successful advocate of "the point of view of Personal Idealism"?

And, first of all, what precisely does he mean by this point of view?

As we have already seen, to advocate this point of view in Ethics is to advocate the view that "the individual's own inviolate spiritual experience is the central fact in Moral Philosophy." And elsewhere Mr. Gibson gives us other phrases which seem to be intended to express the same meaning. We are told that Personal Idealism "adopts as its starting-point the human soul's immediate self-consciousness" (p. 159); and again, that "it starts from the individual's immediate experience"—takes this as its "datum" (p. 212); and again that "the characteristically philosophical datum is the fact of experience *as it is for the experient*" (p. 220).

We presume, then, that in advocating this point of view, Mr. Gibson is, at least, advocating the view that "the individual's immediate experience" (to choose one phrase out of many) is a correct and sufficient starting-point for philosophy generally, and for Moral Philosophy in particular; and by this again we presume he means that from this "experience," we can infer all truths, both moral and philosophical, which can be inferred at all. It only, then, remains to discover precisely what Mr. Gibson means by "the individual's immediate experience"; and here, too, we have data for forming an opinion which seems to leave little room for error. "To start from God's own immediate experience," it appears, would be to start from "what God is for himself" (p.

219); and our own spiritual experience is apparently "inviolable," in the sense that what we are for ourselves is something which nobody else can ever know (pp. 139, 140).

Mr. Gibson is then maintaining that from "what we are for ourselves," all other truths, both moral and philosophical, which can be inferred at all, can be inferred. But we must notice still one other point, in order to define his meaning quite precisely. Plainly no one can take as his starting-point what *all* of us are for ourselves, since what any other is for himself is just what no man can ever know. Mr. Gibson is then maintaining that from what *each* of us is for himself, all other truths can be inferred: he can infer them from what he is for himself, and I can infer them from what I am for myself.

So much for Mr. Gibson's meaning. By way of argument for this extraordinary proposition, I cannot find that he offers anything whatever. It only remains, then, to consider whether the mere statement of it is sufficient to advocate it successfully.

Surely it must be plain that, on the contrary, it refutes itself, since, if this proposition were true, there would be at least one proposition, namely, itself, which could not possibly be inferred from what anyone is for himself. What I am for myself is, by hypothesis, totally unknown to Mr. Gibson; and this being so, surely, from what he is for himself, he cannot infer that from this totally unknown thing, which I am for myself, all truths can be inferred? Surely it is plain that from what I am for myself, if that is my only premise, I cannot infer even that there are any other selves. From *what* I experience, as it is for me who experience it, much can no doubt be inferred; and this is sometimes all that Mr. Gibson seems to mean. But even from this, if it were all "inviolable," in the sense of unknown to anyone else, I certainly could not infer that anything which I know could be inferred from what any one else experiences. It is, therefore, only if we understand the starting-point, which Mr. Gibson recommends, to be "*what* the individual experiences, as it is for the experient," that there seems anything to be said for that starting-point; and though his experience of what he experiences may, no doubt, be inviolable in the two senses that it is a different thing from anybody else's experience of the same thing, and that nobody else knows it in precisely the same manner as he knows it, we must be careful to insist that not even his experience of what he experiences is totally unknown to others. But, if this be all that Mr. Gibson

means, then he has given us very little light upon the question what his starting-point is. What he tells us amounts to little more than a boast that, whatever he does take as his starting-point is true and is immediately known to some individual. This may be so; but we cannot judge whether it is so, until we are told what it is that he takes to be true and immediately known.

Mr. Gibson expresses opinions on a great many other topics beside those mentioned. And almost everywhere he shows the same defects as have appeared in his treatment of his two main theses. He embraces under a single vague expression propositions of the most divers content and importance, without any apparent consciousness of their diversity; and, consequently, propositions of the most extravagant or doubtful character are presented to us as if they must stand or fall with truisms, with which, in fact, they have no closer connection than that the same words may be used to cover both. The book is a very poor book indeed.

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EDINBURGH.

MORAL EDUCATION. By Edward Howard Griggs, Author of "The New Humanism," etc. B. W. Huebsch, New York, 1904. Pp. 352.

The fruit of much practical educational experience, and of large contact, not only with the extensive literature of the subject, but also, what is more important, with the best that is to-day being thought and undertaken in the progressive educational world, this book by Mr. Griggs is one of the significant indications of the trend of education in the present time, while in itself it is a decided contribution to the philosophy and method of education.

The first seven chapters deal with fundamental principles of education, laying the foundation in the nature of the child. Here Mr. Griggs follows closely the methods and results of the child-study movement; and his treatment culminates in the consideration of the type of character to be fostered by moral education, which is described as "a strong and effective moral personality, reverently obedient to the laws of life and controlled by clear-sighted reason; seeing, loving, and willing the best on the plane of life that has been reached, strong in moral initiation, and able to grow independently ever toward loftier vision and nobler